

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

January 19, 2024

The Honorable Monica Bertagnolli, M.D.  
Director  
National Institutes of Health  
9000 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Director Bertagnolli:

Given that the National Institutes of Health is currently the single largest funder of painful research on dogs and cats, we are writing to urge the NIH to support alternatives to harmful animal testing.

Two-thirds of all U.S. households own pets. Recent data shows that sixty-five million households own dogs, 46 million own cats, and that they consider their pets as members of their families.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore not surprising that virtually all Americans want animals protected from abuse and that a growing number are specifically concerned about the treatment of dogs, cats, and other animals in research.<sup>2</sup>

In response to the public's concerns, various federal legislation has been introduced and enacted to reduce and eliminate the use of dogs and cats in painful taxpayer-funded research and has enjoyed bipartisan support.<sup>3</sup> This includes the Protecting Dogs Subjected to Experiments Act to prohibit funding for the NIH's painful research on dogs and puppies and to increase transparency about the widely opposed practice.<sup>4,5</sup>

The 2022 cancelation of completely unnecessary drug tests on dogs being planned by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) underscored the wastefulness of taxpayer-funded dog research and raised serious questions about NIH's oversight of grants and contracts.<sup>6</sup>

Since then, other troubling NIH-funded dog and cat experiments have come to light through investigations by the non-profit, non-partisan White Coat Waste Project and related media reports:

- In one ongoing 75-year-old NIH-funded project, over 100 beagles, Irish Setters, Scottish Terriers, and other puppies are being bred annually at a university lab to suffer from bleeding disorders and are then subjected to painful and terminal studies.<sup>7</sup>
- At another lab that has been continuously funded by NIH since 1985, Terrier and Hound puppies are intentionally bred to exhibit genetic disorders that cause seizures, paralysis, blindness, and deafness for subsequent use in painful research.<sup>8</sup>
- In another NIH-funded project, hound dogs abandoned by their owners at a university lab had capsules full of biting flies strapped to their skin and were subsequently killed.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/pet-insurance/pet-ownership-statistics/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/183275/say-animals-rights-people.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nevadacurrent.com/2023/01/17/animals-should-be-treated-with-care-not-cruelty/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/574/cosponsors?s=1&r=98>

<sup>5</sup> <https://steube.house.gov/in-the-news/progress-to-protect-dogs-from-taxpayer-funded-abuse/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.based-politics.com/2022/07/06/beagle-gate-fauci-funded-animal-experiments-canceled-after-backlash/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.politico.com/minutes/congress/09-28-2022/dog-breeding-investigation/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://ladyfreethinker.org/puppies-bred-for-cruel-experiments-at-upenn-investigation-says/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://blog.whitecoatwaste.org/2023/02/15/wcw-expose-nih-funded-lab-fed-discarded-dogs-to-sand-flies/>

- An NIH-funded university lab is currently infesting beagle puppies with ticks in painful experiments and withholding pain relief from the suffering dogs<sup>10</sup>
- One NIH-funded university lab is breeding kittens to have debilitating genetic disorders that cause loss of muscle control, vision loss, tremors, and early death.<sup>11</sup>
- The NIH's own intramural labs have also purchased beagle puppies from the disgraced puppy mill Envigo for ongoing painful experiments in which the animals are infected with pneumonia to cause septic shock, after which they are bled out and killed.<sup>12</sup>

Based on these reports and other information, we are alarmed by the pain and suffering being inflicted on dogs and cats in NIH-funded labs with taxpayer dollars.

Efforts to curb harmful experimentation on dogs and cats enjoy bipartisan support from taxpayers and Congress and are being pursued by other federal agencies like the Food and Drug Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the US Department of Agriculture. Despite all of this, we are unaware of any such effort at the NIH.

Accordingly, we respectfully request the following information:

- **FY23 NIH Spending on Dog and Cat Testing:** In FY23, how many dogs, cats, and taxpayer dollars were used for painful NIH-funded research and testing intramurally and extramurally?
  - Please list all intramural and extramural projects that used dogs and cats in USDA Pain Categories D and E. For each project, list its FY23 cost to taxpayers and the number of cats and/or dogs used in Category D and E procedures.
- **Dog and Cat Testing Reduction Efforts:** What specific efforts and initiatives, if any, is NIH undertaking to reduce and replace the use of dogs and cats in intramural and extramural research? Has the NIH met with the FDA to discuss how it can avoid the use of dogs and cats in contracts for drug safety testing? Please describe these efforts in detail, including performance metrics and timelines being used to assess progress.
- **Post-Research Dog and Cat Retirement:** Please list and describe current policies that allow or encourage the retirement of dogs and cats used for intramural and extramural NIH-funded research. How many dogs and cats have been retired from NIH's intramural labs over the last five years?

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



W. Gregory Steube  
Member of Congress



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.columbiatribune.com/story/news/education/2024/01/08/white-coat-waste-project-objects-university-missouri-animal-research-funding/72118988007/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.onegreenplanet.org/animals/auburn-university-lab-breeding-sick-kittens-testing-on-them/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.wric.com/news/taking-action/what-happens-to-some-of-the-envigo-dogs-taxpayer-funded-research-exposed/>

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